



Fish tracking project woos consumers

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A project that mapped the fish's journey from crate to dish says it boosted sales among Swedish consumers.

"Cod has had such a lousy reputation in Sweden. In the customers' eyes, cod is something illegal and fished far off the coast," Niklas Hild, who led the eTrace project, told **IntraFish**.

"But now they get to see a printed map which shows that the fish was fished here yesterday, transported like this and here you are."

To do this, eTrace's participants spent five days tracking cod fished by Swedish vessels off Simrishamn from the moment they were caught, all the way through the value chain and to the end seller.

The result was that consumers and buyers could see exactly where and when the fish they were looking at was caught, transported and processed.

According to Fiskelyckan, a retailer in Gothenburg that took part in the project, the experiment hugely boosted its sales.

"Next to the cod, we posted a map showing where the fish was caught and processed," owner Peter Kallstrom said in a statement.

"Instead of selling just a few kilos a day, I sold more than 150 kilos over 4 days. This is a very significant increase for us."

Fiskelyckan was one of three sellers that trialled the five-day projects. The two others were wholesaler Bröd Hansson, which trades at Gothenburg's fish auction, and Ola Andersson, the main chef at the restaurant of Elite Park Avenue Hotel.

Just as Fiskelyckan put the map on the counter, Andersson used it to include the fish's origin on his menu - to great response, according to Hild.



Example of the map.

No added effort

In part, the Swedes' liking for local produce is likely to account for the project's success. "The map told the history that consumers have been waiting to hear, namely that the fish is local," Kallstrom said.

Another key factor seems to be the effortlessness of the technology - the point is that everything is automated so no-one through the value chain needs to lift an extra finger.

"We understand that fishermen out on a boat can't mess around with technology," Hild said. Instead, to get its information, eTrace used the data that the fishermen have to provide the Swedish Board of Fisheries every day.

"Every morning when they leave the harbout, they have to call the the authorities to report their identity, what species they will fish, and at what latitude and longitude."



The project tracked two to four vessels a day fishing cod in Simrishamn, Sweden, for five days.

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This information - which will soon be automated via electronic logbooks on all Swedish vessels - then gets recorded onto eTrace's RFID (radio-frequency identification) receptors, located on the boxes in which the fishermen load the fish.

"So we just give them boxes with our RFID tags already on.... All we have to do from there is read which boxes the fishermen sell to the factory... The fishermen don't have to do anything."

For the test phase, eTrace's own team had to read the information using handheld readers. But on a commercial scale, this would also be automated using RFID portals, Hild said.

Where next?

eTrace now hopes to test its technology on a far larger scale. "The aim is to set up a reference project, that would last maybe six or 12 months, and that would be completely open to everyone, from politicians, to fisheries, processors, European decision makers and retailers to come and see," Hild said.

"We want everyone in Europe to come and have a look for themselves."

Illustrating this, the project used a global and open standard for its RFID technology, reportedly setting it apart from other traceability projects.

The technology's planned commercial model is less clear, however. "That is something that we are going to look at and work on this summer. What we really want is to make it accessible to everyone, including the small fishing boat," said Hild.

If the sales incentive is real, one can see why retailers might be willing to pay for this technology. According to Hild, "the same goes for fishermen, if, say, this allows them to get €0.25 (\$0.31) more per kilo."

eTrace, which is organized by SafeFoodEra, the European Union food safety program, also plans to carry out a pilot phase in Iceland.

The five-day pilot phase took place from May 17 to May 21 and followed two to four Swedish vessels a day.

eTrace participants and partners include SINTEF Fisheries and aquaculture(NO), TraceTracker (NO), Lund University (SE), ROI4U (SE) and The Swedish Board of Fishery (SE).



eTrace member tags a fishing box.

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